



Co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund

Inspire Policy Making with Territorial Evidence

PRE-EVENT BRIEF

ESPON Peer Learning Workshop: Climate change adaptation strategies in the Baltic Sea Region

Virtual

5 May 9:00-12:30 (CET)

Introduction



The growing urgency of addressing climate change, resilience, and the transition to more sustainable development is considered in the Territorial Agenda 2030, which also emphasises that the transition to sustainable development has different potentials and challenges for different rural areas, countries, cities, and regions.

“The European Green Deal with its Sustainable Europe Investment Plan and Just Transition Mechanism linking green and Just Transition objectives aims at combating unevenly dispersed effects of [...] the impact of climate change and [...] at turning climate and environmental challenges into opportunities for all places and making the transition just and inclusive for all.” (Consideration 12).

“The impacts of climate change vary considerably across European geographical regions with different degrees of vulnerability. The Baltic Sea area is one of the prime examples in Europe, in which natural aspects and vulnerability to the social aspects of climate change related to the energy transition collide, even in regional coexistence and neighbourhoods. The increased risks of sea-level rise, heat waves, forest fires, drought, desertification, other land and soil degradation, floods and other natural and mixed natural and technical hazards call for place-based responses, cooperation and coordinated policies.

Climate change mitigation and adaptation actions can even bring new development opportunities for places. This can concern agriculture, the bio-economy, green, blue, and circular economies, and renewable energy production. Climate change impacts as well as mitigation and adaptation actions depend on the territorial context and require tailor-made responses at all levels” (Consideration 35) (see Fig. 1)

In this context, the energy transition envisaged by the Green Deal with the Just Transition Mechanism requires that Territorial Just Transition Plans¹ devoted to territories most negatively affected by the transition be formulated with a place-based approach for alleviating the negative impacts of the transition². Beyond economic impacts, the social impact of the transition to climate neutrality is primarily linked to employment, with direct consequences for the livelihoods of households and families, social exclusion, and important gender implications. It will also cause a wider demographic potential change in some regions affected by the decline of certain sectors as a result of decreasing attractiveness to live and work.

Therefore, in responding to climate change through adaptation, spatial development strategies and plans need to be carefully elaborated at different scales. Indeed, the Territorial Agenda 2030 affirms:

“Climate change and a loss of biodiversity risk eroding livelihoods. Risk and disaster management, as well as prevention measures, are important to building resilient communities. We will respect the natural limits of Europe’s common livelihoods and increase the resilience of all places impacted by climate change. This can be done by developing local and regional strategies for climate-neutral towns, cities and regions” (Consideration number 55, Territorial priorities for Europe, p.19).

EU Adaptation strategy

The European Commission adopted its new EU strategy on adaptation to climate change on 24 February 2021³ setting out how the European Union can adapt to the unavoidable impacts of climate change and become climate resilient by 2050. This strategy also aims to make adaption smarter, swifter and more systemic and to boost international action for climate resilience.

1 Regulation (EU) 2021/1056 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 establishing the Just Transition Fund (JTF).

2 “Those territories shall be those most negatively affected based on the economic and social impacts resulting from the transition” (Article 11(1) JTF)

3 https://ec.europa.eu/clima/eu-action/adaptation-climate-change/eu-adaptation-strategy_en

Regarding smarter adaptation, actions should be based on solid data and sound risk assessment tools available to citizens and businesses in different territorial contexts. The need for swifter adaptation stems from the fact that the effects of climate change are already present and adaptation is a priority that requires the development and dissemination of solutions that help reduce risks, increase protection from its effects and safeguard the availability of freshwater. The awareness that climate change will have impacts at all levels of society and in all sectors of the economy prompts the Commission to integrate climate resilience considerations into all relevant policy areas and to support the development and implementation of adaptation strategies and plans at all levels of governance by adopting three cross-cutting priorities: integration of adaptation into macro-financial policy, nature-based solutions for adaptation, and local adaptation action.

To forge a climate-resilient Europe, the new EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change argues that climate adaptation efforts should better harness synergies with broader efforts to prevent and reduce catastrophe risk.

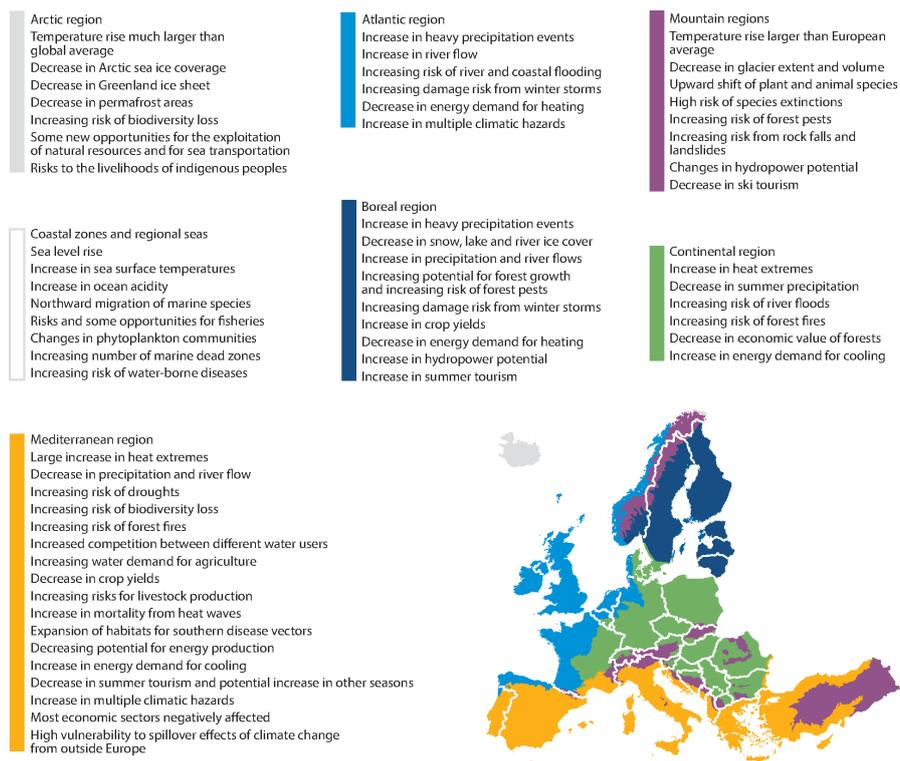


Fig.1 Observed and projected climate change and impacts for the main biogeographical regions in Europe. Source: European Environment Agency 2017 <http://www.eea.europa.eu/data-and-maps/figures/key-past-and-projected-impacts-and-effects-on-sectors-for-the-main-biogeographic-regions-of-europe-3>

Macro-regional cooperation

From the perspective of the European strategy, closer coordination at the national level, at the EU level (within the EU Civil Protection Mechanism), and at the international level (within the Sendai Framework) would achieve greater coherence in action, standards, guidelines, resources, and knowledge.

This is the logic behind the objective of a climate risk assessment for the territory of the Union, based both on the examination of natural and anthropogenic risks and on the quantification of economic impacts, and paying particular attention to health threats, ecosystem vulnerabilities, critical infrastructures, trans-European energy networks (TEN-E) and trans-European transport network (TEN-T) projects.

In parallel, the further development and, above all, implementation of adaptation strategies and plans at all levels of governance must be supported.

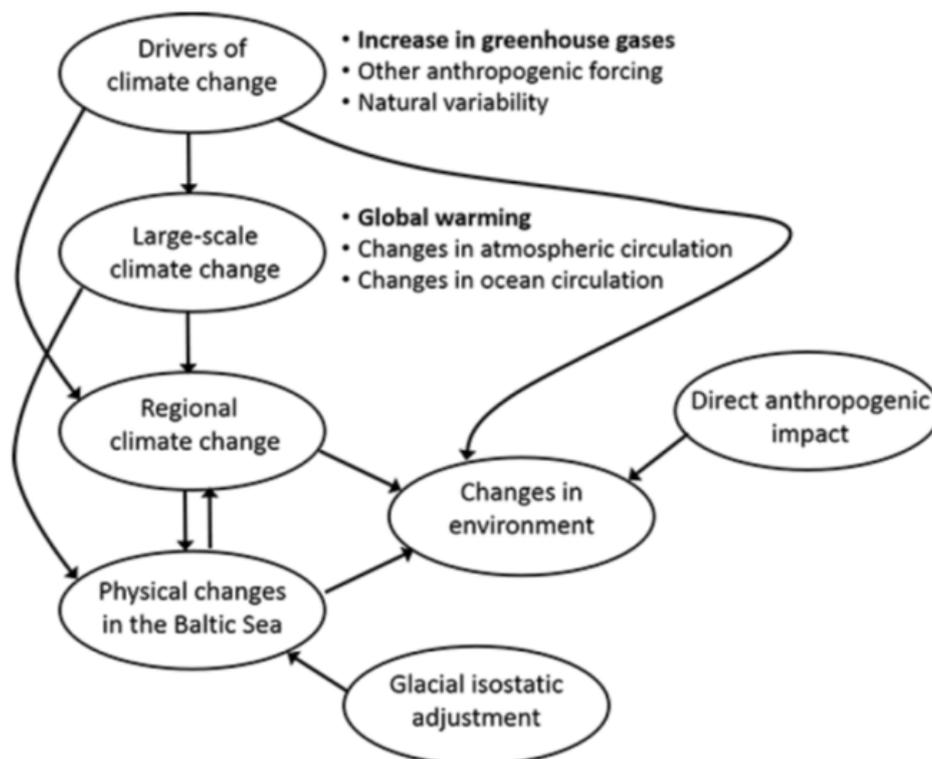
In particular, the macro-regional level constitutes a space for collaboration that is particularly suited to the challenges of climate change. Macro-regional strategies should promote enhanced cooperation in prevention, preparedness, and response in managing common risks.

The Baltic Sea Region is particularly interesting because it offers a macro-regional framework and wide multi-level, multi-purpose cooperation concerning the dynamics of climate change impacts (see Box 1).

Box 1: Climate Change in the Baltic Sea Region

“The ultimate drivers of climate change are divided into three categories—*increase in atmospheric greenhouse gases, other anthropogenic forcing, and natural variability*. Similarly, three aspects of large-scale climate change are identified that will affect the climate change in the Baltic Sea region—*global warming, changes in atmospheric circulation, and changes in ocean circulation*” (Räisänen, 2017, p. 27)

Räisänen (2017) provides a schematic overview of the main drivers and interactions that are expected to affect the climate and the environment in the Baltic Sea region in the 21st century. *The arrow from “Drivers of climate change” to “Regional climate change” refers to local climate forcings, such as land-use change. The arrows from “Large-scale climate change” and “Glacial isostatic adjustment” to “Physical changes in the Baltic Sea” refer to sea-level change.*



[...], the most certain (or least uncertain) aspects of regional climate change in the Baltic Sea basin are those that are most strongly affected by the large-scale global warming. These include increases in atmospheric temperature and Baltic Sea water temperature; decreases in ice cover in the Baltic Sea, lakes, and rivers; and increasing sea level at the southern coasts of the Baltic Sea, where the large-scale sea-level rise is not counteracted by glacial isostatic adjustment. These changes can be considered nearly certain, at least after the first few decades when they might still be masked by natural variability” (Räisänen, 2017, pp. 28)

Räisänen, J. (2017) Future Climate Change in the Baltic Sea Region and Environmental Impacts. Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Climate Science. Retrieved from <https://oxfordre.com/climatescience/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228620.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228620-e-634>

The cooperation context⁴ shows a complex interaction among EU based macro-regions (EUSBSR) and other organisations such as those related to the HELCOM (Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission -

4 The EUSBSR action plan in 2017 listed: Baltic Sea Commission of the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe (<https://cpmr-balti.org>); Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (<https://www.bspc.net>); Baltic Sea NGO Network (multiple national web pages); Baltic Sea States Subregional Co-operation (<https://www.bsssc.com>); Barents Euro-Arctic Cooperation (<https://www.barentscooperation.org>); Council of the Baltic Sea States (<https://www.cbss.org>); Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission - Helsinki Commission (<https://helcom.fi>); Northern Dimension (<https://www.northerndimension.info/>); Nordic Council of Ministers (<https://www.norden.org/en>); Union of the Baltic Cities (<https://www.ubc.net>); Vision and Strategies around the Baltic Sea (<https://vasab.org>)

Helsinki Commission) and those related to the Council of the Baltic Sea States⁵ (CBSS). Within the latter, VASAB⁶ (Vision and Strategies around the Baltic Sea) is the regional intergovernmental multilateral cooperation in spatial planning and development.

“The Baltic Sea region countries are all concerned by vulnerability to climate change with potential impacts on human security, the environment and competitiveness. There are a lot of valuable experiences of mitigation and adaptation to climate change in this region. Therefore, there is much to gain from exchanging experiences and cooperation on specific projects. The Baltic Sea is a sensitive eco-region, and the impacts of climate change are already affecting different sectors on macro-regional scales. It is thus important for local, national, and transnational actors to cooperate on adaptation and mitigation, as well as on risk prevention and management including sharing ‘best practices’ that are proven to be economically, social, and environmentally sustainable. Sharing their learning and – where possible and useful – pooling resources is also important to enhance cooperation”⁷.

The 2017 action plan developed within the Macro-regional Strategy (2009) already foresaw the development of a macro-regional adaptation strategy to better understand the consequences and organise adaptation actions to cope with the impacts of climate change in a region with similar geographical and climatological conditions. It was clear that the Baltic Sea would warm up faster than any other sea in the world, that average air temperatures would increase, and that the pattern and volume of precipitation would change significantly in many areas. The consequence would be an increase in runoff resulting in a greater supply of nutrients to the sea. The frequency of extreme events such as floods and droughts would also increase.

All of this clearly influences how disaster management and, in general, how long-term planning in the Baltic Sea Region is envisaged.

The approach of the first EUSBSR action plan was to face climate change by a specific Horizontal action “Climate” (coordinated by the Council of the Baltic Sea States Secretariat), which included reduction and management of the risks in the Baltic Sea region⁸. In particular, the specific action on climate change adaptation was firstly focused on facilitating the Baltic Sea region climate change dialogue platform in order to: promote and support the implementation of the Baltic Sea region climate adaptation strategy and its action plan⁹; support development, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of national climate adaptation strategies and action plans as well as sharing of best practices in adaptation for specific sectors; initiate and promote joint adaptation actions between all the relevant stakeholders across the region following the recommendations as outlined in the Baltic Sea region climate adaptation strategy and action plan.

In the updated EUSBSR action plan (2021) the climate issue is now mainstreamed in all fourteen policy areas. “Integrating these elements into the policy areas ensures that they are properly taken into account. It also allows the policy areas to tailor-make the implementation of climate change adaptation and mitigation [...] in ways that are the most efficient for each policy area.”¹⁰

5 CBSS members are Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Sweden and Russia which was suspended on 3rd of March 2022 “from further participation in the Council’s activities in response to the unprovoked and illegal war now being waged by Russia against Ukraine, the Ukrainian people and the country’s authorities. Ukraine and Belarus are both among the countries that have observer status on the Council. Belarus is now being suspended from participating in CBSS activities. See: <https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/8818049096154946aedc4b2508cd43f0/220303-final-draft-declaration-cbss-minus-russia.pdf>

6 VASAB member states are: Belarus, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russia and Sweden. VASAB prepares policy options for the territorial development of the Baltic Sea Region and provides a forum for exchange of know-how on spatial planning and development between the Baltic Sea countries. VASAB is guided by the Conference of Ministers responsible for spatial planning and development, steered by the Committee on Spatial Planning and Development of the Baltic Sea Region (CSPD/BSR) composed of representatives of respective ministries and regional authorities

7 European Commission (2017) COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region ACTION PLAN [COM(2009) 248], Brussels, 20.3.2017 SWD(2017) 118 final, p. 55

8 Objectives of HA Climate included mainstreaming climate change mitigation and adaptation into relevant sectoral policies, promoting regional cooperation in creating and empowering the EU climate and energy policy and development, ensuring secure energy supply, as well as efficiently utilising the potential of renewable energy sources.

9 Which it was developed under EUSBSR flagship Baltadapt. The Baltadapt project, financed under the INTERREG IV B Baltic Sea Programme 2007-2013, produced an adaptation strategy for the Region, which is accompanied by guidelines and a non-binding action plan. It is one of the few examples of transnational adaptation strategies in Europe. (see <https://climate-adapt.eea.europa.eu/countries-regions/transnational-regions/baltic-sea-region>).

10 European Commission (2021) COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region ACTION PLAN [COM(2009) 248 final] *Revised Action Plan replacing the Action Plan of 17 March 2017 - SWD (2017) 118 final*, SWD (2021) 24 Final

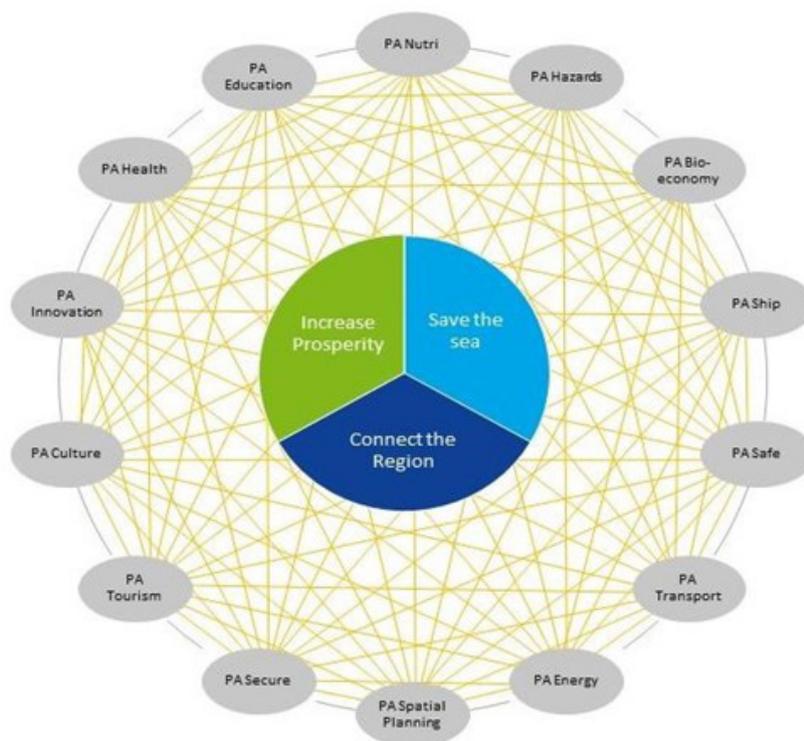


Fig. 2 EUSBSR objectives and policy areas. Source: European Commission, 2021, p.6

The European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) is implemented in concrete joint projects and processes coordinated by Policy Area Coordinators and respective Focal Point.

Role of VASAB

VASAB and HELCOM are the coordinators of the policy area called “Spatial Planning”¹¹ aiming at developing a common approach for cross-border cooperation and achieving a perspective of territorial cohesion in the Baltic Sea Region by 2030. Namely, the region shall be a better integrated and coherent macro-region that has reduced the socioeconomic development divides between its individual parts and has turned the global challenges into assets.

In 2009, the 7th VASAB Ministerial Conference endorsed the Long-Term Perspective for Spatial Development of the Baltic Sea Region (LTP). The LTP identified the most important resources, development trends and challenges for the long-term development of the region, outlining a 15 to 20 year (2030) perspective vision as a result of the joint efforts of countries and organisations, and presenting useful tools and actions to guide the region's development towards territorial cohesion.

The LTP should provide a synergetic contribution to the implementation of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region by animating some key actions through the application of spatial planning systems, tools, and methods to address disparities in socio-economic development between countries and regions, and by establishing a system for monitoring territorial development processes in the region.

In 2021, the process of updating the LTP to the 2040 horizon started on the basis of an initial ‘vision’ articulated on four metaphors: i.e. the pearls, the strings, the patches, and the system – each describing the main spatial elements of the Baltic Sea Region. The pearls indicate urban and rural settlements, the strings describe virtual and physical connections between people and places, the patches are unique areas of the Baltic Sea Region supporting quality and dynamism of life. The system indicates joint efforts fostering

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VASAB and HELCOM jointly for maritime spatial planning and VASAB for land based planning

advanced and cooperating spatial planning. The draft vision was published on March 8th 2022, starting a wider stakeholder consultation that will run until July 2022.¹²

Within this framework, VASAB has also assumed the role of an observatory of trends and processes related to territorial cohesion in the region by developing initiatives for the identification of common indicators measuring the state of territorial cohesion in the BSR.

ESPON contribution

It is in this context that ESPON developed “The Baltic Sea Region Territorial Monitoring (BSR TeMo)” (2012-2014). The main objective of the BSR TeMo project was to develop an operational indicator-based territorial monitoring system, including a political and methodological dimension aimed at promoting territorial cohesion, contributing to European competitiveness, and supporting policymakers at different levels. The VASAB Ministerial Conference of 2014 chose the monitoring system developed by the ESPON BSR-TeMo project as a useful tool for reporting on spatial development processes to ministers and stakeholders. Consequently, the VASAB countries have called on ESPON for a continuation of the BSR TeMo project in order to regularly update and possibly add new indicators to the monitoring system.

In 2018, a new ESPON project “European and macro-regional territorial monitoring tool” was launched. The project aimed to develop a web-based tool providing territorial evidence to stakeholders and policymakers in Europe, particularly in the Baltic Sea, Danube, Alps, and Adriatic-Ionian macro-regions.

Between 2018 and 2019, ESPON developed the project BT2050 - Territorial Scenarios for the Baltic Sea Region, aiming to develop territorial scenarios for the BSR in order to increase evidence based on the territorial dimension of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and contribute to EU MS policy-making and cooperation between BSR countries on territorial development, providing a basis for political discussions, particularly to the VASAB ministerial conferences. It is worth noting that the main objective of the BT2050 project was to provide evidence to support the revision of the VASAB Long-Term Perspective for the Territorial Development of the Baltic Sea Region starting from the original identified thematic areas, which are strong holders for policy recommendation.

Since its early activities, ESPON has conducted research focusing on natural hazards where risk management was considered an important task for cohesion policy (ESPON Thematic Project 1.3.1 Spatial effects of natural and technological hazards). The last project on the issue was ESPON TITAN (Territorial Impacts of Natural Disasters) which provided an analysis of the best practices of disaster risk management and climate change adaptation at the territorial level. The project also identified related instruments and tools (predominantly in spatial planning/territorial development) with an assessment of their benefits and usefulness.

On the other hand, significant effort has been devoted to the study of the effect of climate changes at regional and local levels (ESPON 2013 CLIMATE (Climate Change and Territorial Effects on Regions and Local Economies in Europe)) providing knowledge on mitigation and adaptation measures to be applied in the different types of European regions to cope with climate change and the contribution of territorial policies to mitigation. The ESPON CLIMATE project developed a comprehensive vulnerability assessment methodology based on an IPCC conceptual framework and applied it to all regions across Europe. The methodology and data were updated in 2014.

Recently, following requests from stakeholders and interested member states, ESPON EGTC has commissioned a new update of the methodology, datasets, and maps¹³. This update intends to maintain traceability with the original “ESPON CLIMATE” project, while at the same time aligning it with other key European initiatives and resources, crucial in the framework of the new European Adaptation Strategy, such as JRC PESETA IV report, the Risk Data Hub of the Disaster Risk Management Knowledge Centre (DRMKC), and the Climate Adapt Portal and its European Climate Data Explorer or the Climate Data Store from the Copernicus Climate Change Service.

12 <https://vasab.org/ltp-update-2021-2022/>

13 Final delivery for this update is scheduled for 16 May 2022, see <https://www.espon.eu/projects/espon-2020/monitoring-and-tools/climate-data-and-maps-update>

Objective

Next to climate mitigation, climate adaptation measures have become increasingly important to deal with the impact of climate change. It is increasingly understood how these can be implemented, since climate adaptation plans have also been developed at local, regional, and national levels. However, there is still a gap between visions and plans and real implementation; this is specifically also in transnational regions such as the Baltic Sea Region.

The workshop will be targeting the adaptation measures dealing with the impact of climate change in the context of the Baltic Sea. It will be developed with macro-regional stakeholders and ESPON-related researchers to discuss strategies to face climate change, starting from the results of ESPON project (BT2050 -Territorial Scenarios for the Baltic Sea Region) and tool (Baltic Sea Monitoring tool).

The general idea of the workshop is to connect ESPON results, knowledge, and monitoring tools with national, regional, and local stakeholder and scientist expertise in the light of the climate change challenges and opportunities in the background of the new update of the VASAB Long Term Perspective (LTP) which will be adopted during this year.

On the basis of ESPON evidence, the PLW will focus on the main trends impacting the spatial development and the regional dimension of climate future, discussing with VASAB stakeholders, the key integrated actions for the future of the BSR.

The objective is to show and discuss how ESPON knowledge can contribute to the development of adaptation strategies at the macro-regional, national, and regional levels and how involved stakeholders can make (better) use of trans-European knowledge and case studies.

Policymakers, macro-regional, and local stakeholders and researchers will share their experiences and discuss selected issues related to climate change issue and the role of planning in facing it at different levels.

Questions that will be discussed during the PLW include:

- How should regions and cities cooperate to integrate climate adaptation into spatial planning and territorial development?
- Who needs to be involved in the development and rollout of adaptation strategies for fighting against the impact of climate change in the BSR?
- How relevant is the macro-regional cooperation framework in supporting national, regional, and local authorities as well as the private sector in developing effective and suitable adaptation plans?

The ESPON territorial evidence gathered in previous studies will serve as background and will nurture the discussions around these three questions.

The workshop addresses policymakers and key strategic stakeholders responsible for national and regional adaptation strategies in BSR as well as in European regions, as they are all likely to be impacted by climate change. Invitations are also extended to researchers and stakeholders that were involved in ESPON projects to reflect on how to better make use of, and bridge territorial evidence into, national and regional practice.

Structure and Input

The ESPON Peer Learning Workshop (PLW) “**Climate change adaptation strategies in Baltic Sea Region**” is structured into an introduction and three sessions.

The introductory session, **Setting the scene**, will provide preliminary knowledge about the framework of current effects of climate change dynamics in the Baltic Sea, as well as the current policy overview with the new VASAB Long Term Perspective for the Territorial Development.

The first session is devoted to **ESPON’s role in Territorial development in the Baltic region** and it will focus on the territorial evidence provided by ESPON on these issues. The first reference will be the European and Macro-regional Territorial Monitoring Tool: Baltic Sea Region which provides territorial evidence on the main development trends over time and on the progress, implementation, and contribution of policy objectives as

defined in the EU macro-regional strategies and the LTP VASAB. The second reference will focus on the findings and main contributions to LTB from the ESPON project BT 2050 Territorial Scenarios for the Baltic Sea Region.

The second session of the PLW will deal with **Mainstreaming climate adaptation**, with two contributions coming from the EUSBSR context discussing the climate adaptation approach of the EU Strategy for the Baltic vSea Region. This will be done from the point of view of macro-regional governance and the project CASCADE, a EUSBSR Flagship project under the Secure Policy Area.

The final session (**Panel discussion on the spatial dimension of climate adaptation policies**) will give the floor to Baltic region stakeholders responsible at different levels of policy elaboration and strategy implementation to reflect on the evidence presented. From this, a discussion among speakers about opportunities and challenges, policy changes required in support of suitable long-term adaptation strategies will be developed.

Agenda (German Time)

- 9:00-9:05** **Welcome word: Dr. Wiktor Szydarowski ESPON ECTG Director**
- 9:05-9:45** **Setting the scene: (20 min each)**
Moderated by **Jens Kurnol** ECP- Germany
- How is climate change currently affecting the Baltic Sea?* by **Prof. Markus Meier** (Chair of Baltic Earth Science Steering Group (BESSG) Leibnitz-Institute for Baltic Sea Research Warnemünde, Germany and Swedish Meteorological and Hydrological Institute, Sweden)
- New VASAB Long-Term Perspective for the Territorial Development of the Baltic Sea Region (LTP)* by **Dr. Daniel Meltzian** (Federal Ministry of Housing, Urban Development and Building, chair the VASAB CSPD/BSR)
- 9:45-10:30** **Session one: ESPON's role in Territorial development in the Baltic region (15 min each)**
Moderated by **Volker Schmidt-Seiwert** ECP- Germany
- ESPON knowledge resource for Baltic Sea region: European and Macro-regional Territorial Monitoring Tool: Baltic Sea Region*, by **Sandra Di Biaggio** (ESPON EGTC) (project expert European and Macro-regional Territorial Monitoring Tool)
- ESPON BT 2050 Territorial Scenarios for the Baltic Sea Region*, by **Gustav Norlen** (Senior research fellow, Nordregio)
- Q&A
- 10:30-10:50** **Break**
- 10:50-11:30** **Session two: Mainstreaming climate adaptation (15 min each)**
Moderated by **Wolfgang Pichler**
- Climate adaptation in the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region*, by **Valdur Lahtvee** (expert in the Council of the Baltic Sea States, past coordinator of Horizontal Action Climate in EUSBSR)
- Integrating climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction in the Baltic Sea Region: contribution from the CASCADE project*, by **Heidi Tuhkanen**, Senior researcher Stockholm Environment Institute Tallinn Centre (SEI Tallinn)
- Q&A

11:30-12:30

Session three: Reflections on the spatial dimension of climate adaptation policies

Introduced and chaired by **Alda Nikodemusa** and **Elina Veidemane**, VASAB Secretariat

Panel discussion with three stakeholders

- *How can spatial planning address key challenges in the Baltic Sea region regarding climate change?*
- *Does the draft LTP take the challenges adequately into account?*
- *What are the opportunities and challenges for concrete actions in a macro-regional context?*

Macro-regional stakeholder: **Edvarts Daniels Emersons**, Latvian Ministry of Economics, EUSBSR Policy area Coordinator Energy

National stakeholder: **Sebastian Ebert**, German Environmental Protection Agency, Competence Centre on Climate Impacts and Adaptation) (Germany

Regional stakeholder: **Matti Lipsanen** (Tampere Region, Finland)

Q&A

12:30

Conclusions by Luuk Boelens Belgium ECP



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